

Briefing Paper on the National Marine Fisheries Services' Determination Not to List Atlantic White Marlin under the Endangered Species Act

Summary:

- The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has determined that listing white marlin as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is not warranted at this time.
- The best available information indicates that the white marlin population has declined greatly, but is not at levels that merit ESA protection.
- NMFS will place Atlantic white marlin on our "ESA candidate species" list
- NMFS will reevaluate the need for ESA protection of Atlantic white marlin in 2007.
- Listing determinations are made solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available, after taking into account efforts being made by any state or foreign nation to protect the species, within any area of its jurisdiction, or on the high seas.

Chronology of NMFS' Determination:

- On September 4, 2001 NMFS received a petition to list the Atlantic white marlin as threatened or endangered throughout its range and to designate critical habitat.
- On December 19, 2001, NMFS found that the Atlantic white marlin petition presented substantial information indicating that a listing of Atlantic white marlin may be warranted.
- In Spring, 2002, NMFS assembled a team of managers and scientists to conduct a review of the status of white marlin. The status review team (SRT) summarized all available biological information on white marlin and conducted analyses to predict population trends under various scenarios. The SRT focused their report on the five factors for listing outlined in the ESA:
 - The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of habitat or range;
 - Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;
 - Disease or predation;
 - The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and
 - Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence.
- On September 3, 2002, NMFS Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, Dr. Bill Hogarth, formally determined that ESA listing of white marlin is not warranted.

Population Status and Trends:

- The Atlantic white marlin population is currently at five to 15 percent of historic levels.
- There are currently an estimated 200,000 white marlin in the Atlantic Ocean.
- The most recent estimates of fishing mortality rate (F) are from 2000. They indicate that F was several times higher than that which would result in the maximum sustainable yield.
- The most recent population trends are from 2000. They indicate that the Atlantic white marlin population has declined by an average of six percent annually in recent years.
- Recent scientific information indicates that the white marlin's rate of decline has slowed and the population has perhaps stabilized.

Current Regulatory Mechanisms :

- Domestic and international mechanisms are in place to reduce mortality of white marlin (see attached "FAQs" for details)..
- The US is responsible for only five percent of reported marlin mortality. Therefore, international efforts are required to rebuild white marlin populations
- The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) is responsible for international management of Atlantic white marlin.
- In 2000, ICCAT adopted measures to reduce white marlin mortality. However, these measures have not been in place long enough to evaluate their effectiveness